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SUBJECT: (C) Argentine MFA Shares Some Concerns About Brazilian Foreign Policy, Nuclear Potential

REF: BRASILIA 09 MDA 839

CLASSIFIED BY: Alex Featherstone, A/DCM; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶11. (C) Summary: Argentine MFA nuclear non-proliferation officials shared concerns about the direction of Brazilian security policy in the final years of the Lula Government during a meeting December ¶10. These were "yellow lights" only, but the Argentines were concerned by Brazil's outreach to Iran and North Korea and by unofficial commentary in Brazil about its strategic position alongside the otherwise nuclear-armed "BRIC" countries. The Argentine MFA was even giving some thought to its response in the unlikely event that Brazil developed a nuclear weapon. The GOA officials emphasized that as long as Brazil maintained its acceptance of safeguards and transparency under the IAEA and the Brazil-Argentina Agency for Accountability and Control (ABACC), they were not overly concerned. Nonetheless, they looked to Brazil's 2011 change of president with some relief, because of a belief that no successor would try to sustain the risky foreign policies of the hugely popular Lula, particularly early on in their mandate. End Summary.

¶12. (C) PolMil Officer called December 10 on the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Directorate for International Security, Nuclear and Space Affairs (DIGAN). Embassy had requested the meeting to discuss Argentine views on Brazil. Representing DIGAN were its experienced and respected Director, Gustavo Ainchil, its Deputy Director Alberto Dojas, and staff member Lorena Capra. The participation of the full DIGAN team reinforces Embassy's impression that the Argentines had decided beforehand to share a message of concern with the USG (something reinforced by an earlier visit by the Argentine PolCouns to U.S. Embassy Brasilia to share related concerns, per ref).

¶13. (C) Ainchil began by saying that recent developments in Brazil had caught Argentina's attention. The reception of Iranian President Ahmadinejad had been particularly troubling for Argentina, given its issues with Iran. The visit by Ahmadinejad, coupled with Brazil's decision to open a diplomatic mission Embassy in North Korea, had caused some concern in Buenos Aires about its commitment to international non-proliferation diplomacy. More directly, its longstanding resistance to the Additional Protocol (AP) to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was troubling. (Note: Ainchil confirmed separately to PolOff that while ABACC and the IAEA both had access to civilian and military facilities where nuclear materials were in use, they did not enjoy the broader and

short-notice access envisioned under the AP. Under current arrangements, Brazil shielded certain nuclear technology, such as centrifuges, from Argentine inspectors, while taking elaborate measures to demonstrate that nuclear fuel and materials were fully accounted for in the process. End Note).

¶4. (C) "Yellow lights" had been set off in Argentina, Ainchil said, by these developments as well as by comments by a variety of former officials and academics sharing some frustration that Brazil was prohibited from joining the other BRIC countries as an equal in terms of nuclear weapons capabilities. Moreover, based on his perceptions of current and former Brazilian diplomats at multilateral meetings, Ainchil speculated that some in the GOB were feeling hard-pressed to fully explain and defend the country's positions on the AP and defense policy.

¶5. (C) More generally, Ainchil was concerned about the pace of Brazilian military purchases. The Government had been particularly upset by a visit to Buenos Aires by Brazilian Defense Minister Nelson Jobim at which he made a public address without coordinating with the GOA. Both Argentine Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Foreign Relations personnel had been asked by their leadership not to attend, according to Ainchil. Ainchil suggested that Jobim's influence was seen as excessive within the GOB.

#### Reassurances

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¶6. (C) Ainchil and Dojas described Argentina's reaction to neighbors that were able to spend much more than Argentina on military modernization. In Chile's case, the Government of Argentina (GOA) understood that copper revenues provided a fixed budget for military procurement, but that Chile had taken steps to ameliorate any concern Argentina might feel about being outpaced in military technology. One was Chile's commitment to developing a joint peacekeeping battalion with Argentina, the Cruz del Sur. The second was Chile's focus on demining its border with Argentina, an impressive sign of confidence in the bilateral relationship.

¶7. (C) In the case of Brazil, they said, Argentina trusted the international non-proliferation regime to restrain Brazil. Although the U.S.-India Nuclear Agreement "had been a terrible precedent for Brazil," Ainchil said, Brazil would remain reluctant to run the many risks of rupturing both its regional and international agreements. For the moment, Argentina looked on Brazil as a proliferation risk the way they looked at Germany, Japan or South Korea --countries that could develop and detonate nuclear weapons in no time if they wanted to do so, but whose strong and democratically-based commitment to international rules would in almost all scenarios prevent this decision.

¶8. (C) Ainchil also said that Argentina took comfort in the certainty of a presidential transition in Brazil in 2011. Although he emphasized Argentina's respect for President Lula, he suggested that Lula's unmatched popularity and his late-in-the-term detachment from political considerations had allowed him to become a risk-taker in foreign and defense policy. Any successor, Ainchil speculated, would shy away from such controversial policies in his or her first years, perhaps retrenching on the Iran relationship and becoming more cooperative on new nuclear confidence-building instruments.

#### Strategy

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¶19. (C) Deputy Director Dojas suggested that Brazil had to arrive at a new perspective on the AP on its own. Foreign pressure would be counter-productive. For this reason, Argentina believed it could not sign the AP without Brazil -- to do so would be to back Brazil into a corner on the issue and potentially provoke further hardening of its position. Nonetheless, the GOA believed soft approaches and dialogue with Brazil were important, and suggested that the United States should continue to play a part in this. In particular, Dojas suggested that the USG reach out early to leading presidential candidates Dilma Rousseff and Jose Serra.

¶10. (C) Ainchil volunteered that the MFA was thinking about what steps it should take in the unlikely event that its powerful neighbor backed out of ABACC or worse developed a nuclear weapons capacity. Ainchil thought that Argentina would chose a course of developing and deploying an advanced peaceful nuclear technology to demonstrate capacity, without actually going the way of nuclear weapons. He mentioned a nuclear-powered icebreaker as such a demonstration project.

Comment

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¶11. (C) Ainchil and Dojas clearly wanted to share some concerns or anxieties about Brazil that we suspect are growing in some quarters of the GOA. They appear to want the United States to take the same approach, working softly with Brasilia toward more cooperation within the international non-proliferation regime but not pushing too hard. They hope that Brazil will not go much further before 2011, and that after that date a new political leadership will recommit to transparency and regional cooperation on non-proliferation.

MARTINEZ